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COUNCIL OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION AT GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

BY JAMES L. SLAYDEN

President of the American Peace Society and
Member of the Council

SOME account of the proceedings of the first meeting of the representatives of parliamentary bodies since 1914 may be of interest to the readers of the *ADVOCATE OF PEACE*. The conference I refer to was that of the Council of the Interparliamentary Union, in Geneva, on the 7th and 8th of October last.

The Council met on the call of Baron Weardale, who is President of the Interparliamentary Union and of the British group of the Union. Due to the courtesy of the city of Geneva, the meeting was held in quarters of the educational authorities of that city.

It may be well to explain just what the Council of the Interparliamentary Union is. The Union itself consists of as many members of national legislatures as are willing to associate themselves with it and work to promote the settlement of international disputes by arbitration. Before the war of 1914, there were about 3,500 members of the Union, representing every legislative body in Europe, the United States and Canada in America and Turkey, Japan and China in Asia. An even larger membership is hoped for in the reorganized body, for while some governments have disappeared others have been set up in their places. The Council—a sort of Executive Committee—is composed of two members from each national group. It prepares a program for each conference of the whole Union a few months in advance of its meeting and selects the country and place in which it shall meet.

At the meeting in Geneva, ten countries were represented, to wit, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Switzerland, Canada, and Sweden. Sweden was represented by Baron Adelsward and one colleague; Denmark by her War Minister, Mr. Kunch, and Mr. Moltesen; Holland by the Speaker of her House, or Second Chamber, Mr. Fock, and Mr. van Doorn; and the other countries by men also of distinction and high character. The French delegates were expecting to be present, but were detained at the last moment by an unlooked-for exigency in French politics. Apologies for their failure to appear at the meeting were sent by Baron d'Estournelles de Constant of France, Count de Penha Garcia of Portugal, and Bustany Effendi of Turkey. Dr. Christian Lange, the wonderfully efficient and popular General Secretary of the Union, was present and unanimously renamed for that office. The Union would find it difficult to function without Dr. Lange.

The proceedings of the meeting are not published and, except the brief summary prepared and given out by the General Secretary, I am not permitted to discuss what went on behind the closed doors. However—and it is a pleasing index of the rapid subsidence among intellectuals of the passions of the war—there was nothing but harmony and good-fellowship among the delegates. Professor Eickhoff and Mr. Schücking, who represented the new German Republic, were received courteously by

recent enemies, and their co-operation in the cause of peace heartily welcomed. Both are grave, earnest men, somewhat bowed down by the horrors of war, but looking hopefully to the future.

The Council was really called together to consider a resolution adopted by one of the groups of the Union a few months ago, while the passions of the war were still fresh and strong; but it was recognized as repugnant to the principles of the organization and was not presented.

All the delegates were serious-minded men, whose old hostility to war had been further developed by the horrors of the last five years. Half of them were from the lately belligerent countries, while the other half were from neutral countries that had endured almost as many hardships, bar the fighting, as the actual belligerents.

Some of them, Switzerland, for example, have long death lists that are directly traceable to the war, even if the victims did not die on the field of battle. The mountains of Switzerland are full of tuberculous victims of mobilization, underfeeding, lack of fuel (all of which she has to import), scarcity of medicines, and other war conditions. Even now, one year after the armistice, the problem of feeding and clothing the peoples of Switzerland is puzzling her statesmen. The people are being rationed as rigidly as during the war. Cheese, as staple a food there as meat in the United States, is doled out at the rate of a pound a month to the people who make it. A prominent citizen of Geneva said to me, "It is necessary to export cheese if we are to import coal, and so it appears that we must either be cold or hungry."

The parliamentarians who met in Geneva were a sad group of men, being still under the spell of the great war. But they have not ceased to believe that the world may be spared these horrors by establishing a rule of reason for international relations. They want a world court to settle some disputes, an arbitral body to determine others, and a radical reduction of armaments everywhere. In the main their program is identical with that of the American Peace Society and the Carnegie Endowment.

In private conversation they expressed their earnest hope that the Paris Treaty for Peace and the League Covenant would be speedily agreed to by the United States Senate. Whether with or without reservations or amendments did not much concern them, provided the reservations and amendments are not so radical as to defeat the project altogether. As more than one delegate said to me, "The great thing is to get these international tribunals to work. Where amendments or changes are needed they can be made in the future. Now we need peace and the opportunity to re-establish our normal life."

The next meeting of the Council will be in Stockholm in the spring of 1920, to be followed in the late summer by the great conference of the whole Union itself in the same capital. Baron Adelsward, the leading Swedish delegate, presented the invitation of the Swedish Government to meet in that country in 1920.

The meeting after that will come to the United States, if an invitation is extended by the American Congress. In our American Congress we have a group, Senators and Representatives, of about two hundred fifty members. The British group, Lords and Commons, is much larger, and has on its membership roll such names as

Balfour, Lloyd-George, Asquith, Lord Roseberry, Baron Weardale, Sir Robert Cecil, and other veteran legislators.

The lack of representation in the Union from South America is noted with regret. Europe and the United States would welcome their association in this great international work.

THE PROPOSED LEAGUE OF NATIONS Seven Fundamental Amendments

By WILLIAM I. HULL

I. Adoption and Amendment

The Government of the League of Nations proposed at Paris was offered to the world by the victors in the World War. Like the treaties of peace, it was a dictated and not a negotiated document. It was virtually decided upon, moreover, by three men—the spokesmen of Great Britain, France, and the United States. Two other “great powers” and twenty-two small powers, which were allied or associated against Germany in the war, accepted it after it was decided upon. The four central powers and the twenty-five neutral nations were not consulted in its formation; thirteen of the neutral powers were simply given the option of accepting or rejecting it, while the four central powers, Russia, and eleven of the neutral powers were not even invited to “accede” to it.

These uninvited States may be admitted at some indefinite time in the future, provided a two-thirds vote of the assembly admits them, and provided that they are “fully self-governing,” that they have given “effective guarantees of their sincere intention to observe their international obligations,” and that they shall accept such regulations in regard to their armaments as the League may prescribe.

When the Constitution of the United States was adopted, it was not drafted by the three leading delegates from the three largest States, and the other ten States bidden to “take it or leave it”; nor was it handed down by the victors to the defeated and the neutrals in a recent war. A constitutional convention was held; twelve of the thirteen States were represented in it, and all of them participated in a free and equal discussion and vote upon the various features of the proposed Constitution. This inclusive and mutual procedure was followed in the two Hague conferences.

Reason and experience show that constitutions which are “war-babies,” the children of violence and victory, have a stormy and precarious infancy and seldom reach maturity or old age. The constitution of a world league of nations should not be created by a “treaty” among a handful of allies. The third Hague Conference should be summoned and the world’s fifty-six States, fully represented and freely participating in its deliberations, should continue to work out together the world constitution.

The Covenant as it stands at present can be amended only by unanimous vote of the nine powers represented in the council, and by a majority of the members of the league whose representatives compose the assembly. Moreover, any State that rejects an amendment must cease to be a member of the league; thus the covenant provides for its own nullification, and an easy means of secession and disunion is planted in the bosom of the league at its birth. The Constitution of the United States can be amended by a three-fourths vote of the States, regardless of their size and “power,” and the States which vote against the amendment are not excluded from the Union.

Some means can be found, but only as the result of mutual consideration and concession, in a world assembly to provide for the adoption of future amendments to the world constitution as they are dictated by world needs, and at the same time to prevent a resort to nullification, expulsion, secession, or disunion.

II. National Armaments

The founders of the American Union recognized the plain fact that the Constitution could not be made to work, nor

the Union to survive, unless the rival method of settling disputes among the States, namely, a resort to arms, were eliminated. Article I, section 10, of the Constitution accordingly forbids the States, without the consent of the Congress, to keep troops or ships of war in time of peace, or to engage in war, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent danger as will not admit of delay.

William Penn foresaw this necessity of restricting national armaments to national purposes, if international government is ever to become a success; and President Wilson, in his address to the United States Senate, January 22, 1917, declared: “There can be no sense of safety and equality among the nations if great preponderating armaments are henceforth to continue here and there to be built up and maintained. The statesmen of the world must plan for peace, and nations must adjust and accommodate their policy to it as they have planned for war and made ready for pitiless contest and rivalry. *The question of armaments, whether on land or sea, is the most immediately and intensely practical question connected with the future fortunes of nations and of mankind.*” In accordance with this declaration, he stated one of his Fourteen Points as follows:

“IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.”

Instead of giving and taking adequate guarantees for the reduction and limitation of armaments, the Covenant merely refers this vitally important question to consideration and recommendation by the council, which can act only by unanimous consent. How long it would take this council to solve the problem is a matter of anxious conjecture. In view of the many militaristic tasks imposed by the treaties of peace upon the council, the delay is likely to be long enough to prove fatal to the infant league and its judicial and conciliatory, as distinguished from its military, organs and functions. Meanwhile the nations have taken up again and with renewed vigor their mad competition in the building up of armaments on land and sea and air and in the multitude of measures looking toward military “preparedness.”

The treaty with Germany lays down a precise and radical program for the reduction and limitation of armaments *in Germany*; the foremost, essential amendment of the revised Covenant is the application of this program to the rest of the world.

III. Mandatories

Together with the competitive increase in armaments, the prime cause of the recent war, as of numerous other wars, was the rivalry among the “great powers” in the appropriation and exploitation of the “backward” lands and peoples of the earth. President Wilson’s demand (in his fourteen points), that these lands and peoples should become the wards of the entire family of nations and should be given a fair degree of self-determination, was practically nullified by the demand of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan for the spoils which war has usually assigned to the victors.

The Covenant, it is true, endeavors to provide for international supervision of the mandatory power by laying down certain principles of conduct in its dealings with the backward people assigned to it and by demanding an annual report of those dealings. But, so far from appointing genuinely international commissions to administer these backward lands in the interest of their own people and of the whole world, the League is not even to appoint the mandatory powers. It is simply to recognize the *status quo*. As a consequence, three or four of the great powers of Europe and Asia have been (ever since the armistice) conniving, bargaining, threatening, and even fighting to get their clutches upon as many of these backward lands as possible before the League gets under way. They have attempted to cajole the United States into accepting a mandatory over Armenia, or Constantinople, or some portion of central Africa, hoping thereby to entangle our government in the general scramble and thus secure its sanction for their great game of grab. The United States Government, so far as is known, has thus far eluded the snare; but how difficult it will prove to induce the mandatory powers “to haul down the flag,” to release their dead-man’s grip upon the lands and peoples thus brought within their “sphere of influence,” let Korea, Manchuria, Egypt, Morocco, Fiume, the Philippines, and scores